# Australia, Indonesia and the Papuan crises

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# Australia, Indonesia and the Papuan crises

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## Introduction

Richard Chauvel, of Victoria University, argues that Australia and Indonesia confront multi-faceted and interrelated crises in Papua. The depth of political instability in Papua is clear from key incidents in the first three months of this year, "Papuan resistance and Indonesian repression remain the dominant characteristics of Indonesian rule in the territory." On the other hand, Chauvel argues, these crises on the Indonesian side are being compounded by "a remarkable combination of Australian over-confidence, insouciance and ignorance". In policy terms, argues Chauvel, Australia faces a great political challenge because of opposition within the Indonesian army and government to the president's policy of autonomy for Papua: "a promising policy of Special Autonomy supported by the president is being opposed by an array of forces within the Indonesian government headed by the military, intelligence agencies, and the Ministry of the Interior."

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## Essay - Australia, Indonesia and the Papuan crises

Australia and Indonesia confront multi-faceted and interrelated crises in Papua. [1] The bilateral relationship has been placed under significant stress by the Australian decision to grant temporary protection visas to 42 Papuan asylum seekers. The asylum seekers arrived on Cape York in January 2006, pleading for freedom, peace and justice, flying the Papuan Morning Star flag and a banner claiming that the Indonesian military was committing genocide in Papua. It was a political act designed to attract Australian and international attention to the struggle for Papuan independence. The seeking of asylum, together with the shooting of three Papuans in Paniai, numerous disturbances around the Freeport mine and a riot in Abepura, in which five members of the Indonesian security forces were killed, are all incidents in the first three months of 2006 that show the depth of political instability in Papua. Papuan resistance and Indonesian repression remain the dominant characteristics of Indonesian rule in the territory. But the crises stemming from the Indonesian side of the equation are being compounded by a remarkable combination of Australian over-confidence about the solidity of its relations with the Indonesian government, insouciance about the extent and effects of Indonesian repression, and ignorance of Australia's own historical role in Papua. Moreover, Australia faces an even greater difficulty in dealing with the dynamics of Indonesian policy in Papua, where a promising policy of Special Autonomy supported by the president is being opposed by an array of forces within the Indonesian government headed by the military, intelligence agencies, and the Ministry of the Interior.

### Australia, Indonesia, and Papuan history

On 30 March 2006 John Howard claimed that Australia had never disputed Indonesian sovereignty in Papua. [2] The historical record makes clear a more complex pattern of policy development, a history of which most Australians, including apparently the prime Minister, are ignorant. Australia was actively engaged, against Indonesia, in the 12 year long international dispute between 1950 and 1962 about whether Papua was part of Indonesia. Together with East Timor, Papua has dominated two long periods of the relationship with Indonesia - between 1950-1962 and again between 1974-1999. However, it is not merely the duration of the tensions that is critical, but the depth of feeling aroused on both sides by these two territories at Indonesia' s eastern extremities closest to Australia. From the Indonesian vantage point, Papua and East Timor related to matters of Indonesia's territorial integrity and national pride, together with ideological underpinnings of what constituted Indonesia. From the Australian point of view, in addition to a security interest in nearby territories, some Australians have had difficulty in accepting that Indonesia is a multi-ethnic state. Australians have been receptive to Timorese and Papuan arguments that they are ethnically and culturally different from Indonesians and should not be part of Indonesia.

Can Indonesia successfully accommodate Papuan values and interests in its nation state? This has been a central problem since Indonesia assumed control over the territory in 1963. Yet the debate about Papua's place in Indonesia and Papua as a focus of international dispute has a much longer history dating back to Indonesia's proclamation of independence in 1945. In 1945 Indonesia's founders debated whether Papua should be included in the proclamation of independence. When The Netherlands transferred sovereignty over the East Indies to independent Indonesia in 1949, Papua was excluded and remained under Dutch administration. Indonesia conducted a diplomatic effort, supported by military infiltrations, against the Dutch. President Sukarno successfully used this campaign to reclaim Papua as a strategy to consolidate national unity at a time of otherwise serious and deepening splits in the national elite. That Papua was part of Indonesia was one of the issues on which all Indonesian political leaders and political parties agreed. This consensus remains strong today among non-Papuan Indonesians, as the response from Jakarta's politicians to the visa decision demonstrates. In the New York Agreement of August 1962 [3], Indonesia achieved a great

diplomatic triumph. In negotiations, supported by the United States and mediated by the United Nations, Indonesia gained control of the administration of Papua in May 1963.

For most of the 12 year struggle between Indonesia and the Netherlands after 1950, Papuans were the object of, rather than participants in, the dispute. However, the dispute provided the catalyst and framework for the emergence of Papuan nationalism. The first Papuan demand for independence made in 1961 was an expression of the Papuan claim to determine its own future. This demand for independence was symbolised the first raising of the Morning Star Flag on 1 December 1961. Many post-Suharto Papuan nationalists have constructed the flag raising as an independence day. The Papuan demand for independence, together with a Dutch program of decolonisation that promised independence by 1970, prompted President Sukarno to bring the conflict with the Dutch to a head with a command, in December 1961, to liberate Papua and crush the Dutch-created puppet state of West Papua. Sukarno realised that a rival Papuan national claim to the territory was a much greater threat to Indonesia than the continuation of Dutch administration.

Contrary to the Prime Minister's claim, from 1950 to January 1962 Australia rejected Indonesia's claim to Papua and supported the continuation of Netherlands administration. There were two elements in the Australian policy. Firstly, it was asserted that Australia had a vital strategic interest in Papua, which was part of New Guinea and the island areas immediately adjacent to Australia. These islands were the last ring of defence against aggression and "...Australia must be vitally concerned with whatever fundamental changes take place in any of these areas... The Australian people are deeply interested in what happens anywhere in New Guinea." [4] Secondly, Percy Spender, Menzies' first External Affairs Minister, argued that Papua did not form part of Indonesia, rather had much in common with the then Australian territories of New Guinea and Papua. "It (Papua) is part of the one mainland, divided merely by a line drawn on a map. It is inhabited almost wholly by people of the same ethnic origin and having the same social and economic problems as those of the people of Papua and Australian New Guinea." [5] In 1957, Australia and the Netherlands signed an agreement for cooperation between the two colonial administrations in New Guinea. The agreement foreshadowed the possibility that the two halves of the island might unite upon independence. No lesser figure than John Kerr was an advocate of a Melanesian union in New Guinea.

In January 1962, when diplomatic tensions between Indonesia and The Netherlands seemed likely to spill over into military conflict, the Minister of External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick, persuaded the Menzies Government that Australia's interests were best served in a close and cooperative relationship with a united Indonesia. Barwick argued that it was not in Australia's interest to support an independent Papua, as promised by the Dutch. Such a state, he contended, would be small, unviable, indefensible and the focus of Indonesian antagonism. [6]

The 1962 reversal on Papua represented the failure of an Australian policy that had dominated relations with Indonesia for over a decade. The decisions in 1949 and 1950 to support continued Dutch administration in Papua had transformed Australia from being the foremost western supporter of Indonesia's struggle for independence against the Dutch to Indonesia's principal opponent, second only to the Dutch. In the immediate aftermath of Sukarno's success in Papua, the Menzies government turned its attention to Portuguese Timor. Barwick argued that Portuguese Timor was "an anachronism in this part of the world" and it was "not capable of political independence". "Thus, if Indonesia seeks to incorporate Portuguese Timor by some peaceful means and providing that this was in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the Timorese, Australia would have little alternative but to acquiesce. Indeed such an arrangement might have advantages over other possibilities." [7] The Australian Cabinet accepted, in February 1963, that there was "no practical alternative to eventual Indonesian sovereignty over Portuguese Timor". [8]

The best course for Australia was to persuade Portugal to cede the territory peacefully and mobilise international pressure on Portugal to this end.

The rationale behind Barwick's strategic assessment of relations with Indonesia - that it was not in Australia's interest to foster the emergence of small states in the eastern archipelago - informed the policy decisions of the Whitlam and Fraser government about East Timor in the mid 1970s. Barwick's rationale also underpins the Howard's government's declarations of Australia's support for Indonesia's sovereignty in Papua in the current crisis. On 7 April the Prime Minister argued that "...the worst thing that could happen for the West Papuans would be fragmentation of Indonesia." [9]

Papuan resistance to Indonesian rule commenced shortly after Indonesia assumed control over the administration in 1963. The Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka - OPM) was established in 1964 and the first major revolt around Manokwari took place in 1965. The OPM's armed resistance was local and sporadic, but persistent. OPM never threatened Indonesian control of the territory but Indonesia has not been able to eliminate it or the aspirations for independence that the OPM represented for many more Papuans than those who joined its armed struggle. The Suharto government that came to power in 1966 wanted to restore Indonesia's standing in the international community. One of the ways of doing so was to fulfill Indonesia's obligations under the New York Agreement and permit the Papuans to determine whether they wanted to remain in Indonesia. Given the strength of Papuan resistance and the significant deterioration in material conditions since the Dutch left, the Suharto government faced a dilemma: how to hold an " Act of Free Choice" that produced the only acceptable result for Indonesia - a unanimous vote of the Papuan people in favour of joining Indonesia - and to do so in such a way so that the result appeared to be the credible and legitimate expression of the will of the Papuan people. In his exhaustive study of the Act of Free Choice commissioned by the Dutch Government, Pieter Drooglever noted that: "In the opinion of the Western observers and the Papuans who have spoken out about this, the Act of Free Choice ended up as a sham, where a press-ganged electorate [of 1025 selected Papuans] acting under a great deal of pressure appeared to have unanimously declared itself in favour of Indonesia." [10] When the General Assembly "noted" the results of the "Act of Free Choice" in November 1969, Indonesia secured the international recognition for its sovereignty in Papua. However, in Papuan eyes, the repression and manipulation used to produce the result forms one of the pillars of the Papuan nationalists' demand for independence. The Australian Government might have been embarrassed and uncomfortable with the manner in which Indonesia conducted the 1969 "Act of Free Choice", but the outcome - Papua's incorporation into Indonesia - was consistent with the strategic decision it had made in 1962.

**The Papuan Spring - 1998-2000**

The current political dynamics and policy dilemmas surrounding Indonesian governance in Papua commenced with the fall of Suharto in 1998. The decline of the central government's authority and the reformasi movement's ethos of democratisation and respect for human rights facilitated the revival of independence movements in East Timor, Aceh and Papua. In the latter years of the Suharto government, it had appeared that Suharto's "security approach" had successfully subjugated Papua. However, in retrospect, the speed and breadth of the revival of the independence movement in Papua was a measure of the failure of Suharto's policies. Papuan nationalism was much stronger in 2000 than it was when the Dutch left. Suharto's policies, rather than pacifying Papuans, had fuelled Papuans' resentment of Indonesian rule and facilitated the consolidation and broadening of Papuan nationalist sentiment.

In the brief period between the fall of Suharto and the end of 2000 - the "Papuan spring" - there was a political space for the relatively free articulation of ideas and political organisation that enabled a group of Indonesian- educated, urban based, Papuan intellectuals, officials, church leaders and

human rights activists together with some traditional leaders to successfully mobilise widespread community support for independence. This Papuan elite rejected the armed struggle of the OPM and hoped, naively perhaps, to achieve independence through a dialogue with the Indonesian government and the international community. A team of 100 Papuan leaders met with President Habibie in February 1999 and shocked the President and his cabinet with the straightforward demand that Indonesia recognise Papua's independence.

Confronted with a revival of the independence movement in Papua, the policies of the democratising governments of the post-Suharto era have vacillated between the accommodative and the repressive. In the first year of his tenure, President Abdurrahman Wahid tried to accommodate Papuan demands. He permitted the name of the province to be changed from Irian Jaya to Papua and allowed the Papuan Morning Star flag to be flown. Wahid even helped fund a Papua Congress in mid 2000, the second of two pro-independence mass meetings, at which the Papuan Presidium Council was established and Theys Eluay confirmed as its leader.

The Papua Congress was both the high point of open mobilisation of support for independence and the turning point in government policy from the accommodative to the repressive. A Department of Internal Affairs intelligence document, prepared shortly after the Congress, observed that, following the Congress, the atmosphere down to the village level was one of euphoria and enthusiasm with the idea of Merdeka (independence). The "conspiratorial groups" supporting Merdeka were increasingly cohesive and were endeavouring to "socialise" the results of the Congress throughout Papua, elsewhere in Indonesia and internationally. It is important to note that the "conspiratorial groups", identified by Jakarta, included some of the most prominent Papuans in the Indonesian administration as well as Theys Eluay and his colleagues. [11]

Progressively, during the second half of 2000, the reformasi political space in Papua was closed down. The process culminated with the arrest, on charges of treason, of Theys Eluay and four of his Presidium colleagues in the run up to planned celebrations for the 1 December anniversary of Papuan "independence" in 1961. A few days before the arrests, the then Security Minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had warned that any commemoration of the independence declaration would be regarded as an "act of treason" and tough measures would be taken. [12] One Indonesian source reported that 4 battalions of army and mobile police had been assembled in the port area of central Jayapura. [13] The leaders arrested had been among Jakarta's negotiating partners for the previous two years. With the arrests the political atmosphere in Jayapura changed dramatically and instantly. In November 2001 Theys Eluay was assassinated by Kopassus troops. [14]

It was as if the authorities in Jakarta had asked themselves the question: How much political freedom could the government permit in Papua, if the political space was used to mobilised popular support for independence? The answer came in the next phase of Jakarta's policy making and negotiations with Papuans which was associated with a Special Autonomy Law for Papua, but which was itself only partially implemented, and undermined by the partition of the province.

**Special Autonomy vs. Partition**

Special Autonomy for Papua was part of the Broad Outline of government policy (GBHN), 1999-2004 and was specifically linked to the objective of strengthening the national integrity within the unitary state. In August 2000, a special session of the Indonesian parliament criticised Abdurrahman Wahid's handling of separatism in Papua and his accommodation of Papuan national symbols and instructed the President to implement special autonomy. Ironically, a year later the parliament would pass a law that permitted Papua to have its own symbols.

The Special Autonomy Law for Papua (Law 21/2001), enacted on 21 November 2001, established

Papua as a self-government region within Indonesia. The central government powers were restricted to foreign affairs, external defence, internal security, monetary policy, the Supreme Court and religion. Papua would receive between 70% and 80% of government revenues raised in the province. The law sought to protect and promote Papuan values and interests with the establishment of an ethnic Papuan upper house - the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP). The Governor of Papua had to be a Papuan.

The process of formulating the law was as important as the provisions of the law itself. The law was negotiated between a committee of the Indonesian parliament and group of academics, NGO leaders and officials appointed by the Governor of Papua. The governor's group did not achieve all their objectives in the law, but it was the first time Papuans had participated in the formulation of central government policy and those involved and their supporters had a strong sense of ownership of the law. Papuan supporters of Special Autonomy, like parliamentarian Simon Morin, saw it as a "third way" to solve the Papua conflict. [15]

Soon after the Special Autonomy Law was passed it became clear that there were sections of the Indonesian government that considered the concessions made were too generous and they sought to undermine the law's implementation. The Governor of National Resilience Institute (Lemhannas), Professor Dr Ermaya Suradinata, argued that Special Autonomy would empower a Jayapura-based Papuan elite, including the Governor, whom he regarded as a threat to national unity. Ermaya advocated that Papua be partitioned into three provinces, with the objective of dividing and marginalising the pro independence groups. [16] Hendropriyono, the head of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN), and Hari Sabarno, the Minister of Internal Affairs, were influential promoters of partition. [17] Although Hendropriyono has since retired as head of BIN, the organisation's support of partition and influence in policy making about Papua continues.

In January 2003 President Megawati Sukarnoputri issued a Presidential Instruction to divide Papua into three provinces, West Irian Jaya, Central Irian Jaya as well as the existing province of Papua. Thus far, only the province of West Irian Jaya has been established. The attempt to establish the province of Central Irian Jaya in August 2003 sparked several days of violence and an eventual government decision to maintain the status quo of just two provinces. Megawati's instruction contravened both the letter and the spirit of the Special Autonomy Law. Jacob Solossa, the governor of Papua and a principal architect of autonomy, was not consulted, nor was Megawati's own Security Minister, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. [18] With the benefit of hindsight, no single Indonesian government decision has been more destructive of Papuan trust in Jakarta's intentions and more damaging to the prospects of a political resolution of the Papua conflict.

**TNI, Internal Affairs, and the undermining of autonomy**

The opposition to the Special Autonomy Law and support of partition from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, BIN and sections of the TNI was critical. Each of these organisations had interests in the centralised status quo as well as having the capacity to frustrate the implementation of the law and change the 'facts on the ground' in Papua. None of these organisations had exercised much influence on the negotiations between the DPR committee and the governor's group. Indeed, the committee had adopted the Papuan draft as the basis for negotiations rather than the Ministry of Internal Affairs' draft. One senior Ministry official argued that involvement of Papuans in the formulation of the legislation was inappropriate and that the parliament had made concessions to the Papuans under threat of secession. [19] The Ministry of Internal Affairs' support for the division of Papua predated the Special Autonomy Law. Division of the province was one of the strategies advocated in the Ministry's intelligence assessment of June 2000. [20] The Ministry was able to disrupt the implementation of Special Autonomy by delaying the issuance of the government regulations that enabled implementation of the Special Autonomy Law and the establishment of the Papuan Peoples

Assembly as well as by delaying the disbursement of revenue under the law.

At a 2003 National Defense Council workshop one of the challenges discussed was the limited size of the security forces in Papua in relationship to the size of the territory and its difficult terrain. One of the advantages of partitioning Papua into three provinces would be the establishment of a military organisation in the new provinces that mirrored the civilian administration, thereby increasing the deployment of the security forces in the territory as a whole. [21] Given the turmoil and controversy that has surrounded the partition of the province it is difficult to ascertain whether there has been an increase in troop deployments directly associated with the establishment of the new West Irian Jaya province. However, there has been an announcement of a substantial redeployment of troops to Papua. In November 2005, Kostrad commander Lieutenant General Hadi Waluyo, unveiled a long-term plan for the establishment of a 3rd Kostrad division to be based in Sorong. "Stationing a Kostrad division in Papua is aimed at settling all security threats and problems." Waluyo identified the threat of globalisation and foreign influnces that might spread the values of "primordiality" (sic), separatism and terrorism. [22] The reduction of the military's presence in Aceh was a crucial part of the Helsinki agreement; it would appear that the military has the opposite intention in Papua.

No discussion of the military in Papua is complete without reference to the territory's importance in the political economy of the military and the security consequences that flow from this. The International Crisis Group argued in 2002 that: "A major risk of conflict stems from the Indonesian security forces. The experience of Freeport and the logging industry shows that the presence of soldiers or police can turn a local dispute or a criminal matter into violence." [23] It is estimated that only about 30% of the military's expenses are funded from the State budget. The remainder must be raised from the profits of military-controlled enterprises. Conflict and resource rich regions like Papua and Aceh have been an important source of revenue for the security forces. It follows that with the partial withdrawal of troops from Aceh under the Helsinki MOU, Papua becomes relatively more important for TNI's revenues. In December 2005, the New York Times published an expose on the financial relations between the Indonesian military and the Freeport gold and copper mine. The New York Times estimated that Freeport had spent $US35 million on "military infrastructure". In addition, company records "...show that from 1998 through 2004, Freeport gave military and police generals, colonels, majors and captains, and military units, nearly $US20 million." These payments to officers were payments to individuals rather than to the institutions for which they worked. [24]

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has inherited a confusing and contradictory policy on Papua. Will the Indonesian government implement the Special Autonomy Law or is it intent on dividing Papua into two or more provinces? The President has made numerous public commitments to seek a resolution based on Special Autonomy. However, the recent policy decisions of his government have made a political resolution more difficult. The decision to hold elections for governor in the newly created province of West Irian Jaya indicates that the government is determined to pursue the partition of Papua. This decision undermined and marginalised the Papuan Peoples' Assembly, the institutional centre piece of Special Autonomy, which the government itself established as the representative forum for Papuans. The decision also disregarded the Assembly's recommendation in March this year that the governor's election not be proceeded with as the Assembly had found that there was little Papuan support for the new province. In this decision, as in earlier ones consolidating the de facto existence of the province of West Irian Jaya despite the absence of a legal foundation, retired Lt.General Mohammad Ma'ruf, the Minister of Internal Affairs has been a major player. [25] Ma'ruf put a spin on the Assembly's recommendation. He argued that the Assembly, rather than rejecting outright the province and elections for its governor, had said it was not yet time. [26] Without any further consultations with the Assembly, Ma'ruf announced that elections for governor would take place five days later. [27] Further, Ma'ruf declared that West Irian Jaya would be administered under the general autonomy law, rather than under the financially and politically much more

generous Special Autonomy Law. [28]

In the aftermath of the Abepura riots in March 2006, Widodo, the Security Minister, together with other Ministers and military leaders visited Jayapura on two occasions. On both occasions, Widodo and his colleagues avoided substantive discussions with the Papuan leaders of provincial parliament, the Papuan People's Assembly and religious communities. [29] During the first visit on 17 March, Papua's foremost religious leaders appealed to central government to hold a comprehensive dialogue with Papuans. The Freeport mine, which the Abepura demonstrators wanted closed, was "an iceberg of the protracted problem that the Central Government had not addressed." [30] On 5 April, President Yudhoyono made a rare visit to Papua to attend a rice harvest ceremony for Javanese migrant farmers in Merauke. He spoke eloquently of the uniqueness of Papuan society and culture, the need to improve the welfare of indigenous Papuans and, once more, committed his government to Special Autonomy. However, by not including Jayapura in his visit, the President, like Widodo, avoided discussions with Papuan leaders. [31]

"If you encourage a process of fragmentation of the Republic of Indonesia, you're going to end up with a lot of turmoil and inevitably human rights abuses and deprivation of liberty than would otherwise be the case." [32] John Howard made this statement as warning for those supporting Papuan independence. Turmoil, human rights abuses and deprivation of liberty is also an accurate description of political conditions in Papua since the end of 2000, when the "Papuan Spring" was brought to an end. The 2005 US State Department Report on Human Rights in Indonesia noted that there had been "...improvements in the human rights situation during the year and, although significant problems remained particularly in areas of separatist conflict, the end of the country's long-running internal conflict in Aceh Province was a major step forward." Some of the specific cases in Papua discussed in the report included the use of torture to obtain confessions, indiscriminate reprisals associated with military operations against the OPM, frequent and arbitrary detentions, use of excessive force in controlling demonstrations, widespread monitoring, threats and intimidation of NGO workers by intelligence officials. Although the Papua Special Autonomy Law permits flying of the Morning Star Flag, police arrested Philep Karma and Yusak Pakage for raising the flag on 1 December 2004, the "independence" anniversary. In 2005 Karma and Pakage were sentenced for 15 and 10 years respectively on charges of treason. The State Department report argued that indigenous people, most notably in Papua, remained subject to widespread discrimination, and there was little improvement in respect for their traditional land rights. [33]

The shootings of three Papuans by the security forces in Paniai in January 2006 illustrates something of dynamics in relations between Papuans and the security forces. It also highlights the role of violence in the relationship. The police and military's own accounts of the Paniai shootings show how a relatively minor non-political disagreement between Papuans and the Indonesian security forces led to the police and military using force to assert their authority. There is no suggestion in the police or military accounts that the three Papuans shot were pro-independence activists. [34] The security forces' use of violence politicised the incident. A couple of days after the shootings several hundred people demonstrated in Jayapura demanding that all Indonesian troops be withdrawn from Papua. [35]

**The Abepura riot: a Santa Cruz for Papua?**

In the aftermath of the Paniai shootings, Juwono Sudarsono, the Indonesian Minister of Defence, acknowledged that there had been abuses by some soldiers, but argued that Jakarta was working hard to minimize violations. [36] This says something about the limits of Jakarta's control of the behavior of troops on the ground. It also shows an understanding of the counterproductive dimension of troops asserting Indonesia's authority through force and how violence by the security forces can damage Indonesia's reputation internationally and can raise questions about the

legitimacy of Indonesian rule. Three days after the Abepura riot, Juwono Sudarsono said the government suspected that there had been manipulation and preparation involved in the riot: "We suspect that there were various groups that wanted to orchestrate a gross violation of human rights by the security forces so that would become an international issue, then damage our reputation politically, economically and security wise." He agreed with a journalist's comparison with the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor. He thought the riot was just too well organised and suspected the involvement of Indonesians and foreigners. [37] The Presidential spokesman, Andi Mallarangeng, argued that the five security officials who had lost their lives had died in the Abepura riot because they had been ordered by the President to avoid violent clashes that could inflame international resentment by creating a second Santa Cruz in Papua. [38]

How much restraint was exercised by the riot police in the Abepura riots? By the standards of the troops who killed scores of Timorese students at Santa Cruz, there was restraint. The riot police used tear gas and shot mostly in the air, but the Metro TV footage shows at least one man shooting into the crowd. International Crisis Group states that twenty-four civilians were hospitalised, including five with gunshot wounds. [39] It would seem that the Jakarta authorities were not happy with the way the riot police (BRIMOB) managed the riot, as the following day the commander of BRIMOB in Papua, Tatang Hermawan, was dismissed from his position because of mistakes he had made that resulted in the deaths of two of his men. [40] After the riots, the Cenderawasih Pos reported that the riot police, angered by the death of their colleagues, conducted sweeping operations around Abepura, with much shooting into the air, leaving 3 civilians wounded by stray bullets. Student dormitories were ransacked. Most the shops and offices of a busy market centre were closed, the university deserted and most people were too scared to leave their homes. According to the Cenderawasih Pos, Abepura was gripped by fear. [41]

The sweeping operation prompted the religious leaders of Papua, led by Most Rev. Leo L. Ladjar OFM, the Catholic Bishop of Jayapura, to appeal to the Government "...to restrain the uncontrollable behaviour of the Special Mobile Brigade of the Police (BRIMOB) that blocked the road and conducted house-to-house search to the students dormitories. Such an operation intimidated the students and the residents in this area and even resulted in a number of casualties." [42] In a similar vain, Albert Rumbekwan, head of the Papua section of Komnas HAM (National Human Rights Commission), regretted the unauthorised revenge actions taken by members of the riot police, which was often directed at people who had not been involved in the riot. He argued that such actions terrorised the civilian population. [43] Most of the riot police involved in the riot were subsequently confined to their barracks. [44] The Police Chief in Papua, Drs Tommy Jacobus, promised to take tough measures against any police who disturbed or terrorised the civilian population. [45]

On the basis of a limited public record, there seems to have been some, partially successful, attempt by the government to control the behaviour of the riot police. Jakarta's endeavour to limit civilian casualties was more evident during the riot than in the sweeping operations that followed. It is not possible to evaluate any Indonesian intelligence information about the organisation of the riot and its objectives. However, it is evident from the Defence Minister's construction of the events, that the government is extremely anxious about foreign interest in Papua and fearful of another international intervention.

John Howard has argued that: "The best path forward for West Papua is to be part of a more prosperous, more democratic Indonesia." [46] The Prime Minister is correct in identifying democratic freedoms and improved standard of living as two critical conditions necessary to persuade Papuans that Indonesia has a future to offer them. Papua is one of Indonesia's resource rich provinces, yet Papuans have some of the lowest living standards in the country. Indonesia has made remarkable progress in creating a more open and democratic political system. In the two years

following the fall of Suharto, Papuans enjoyed some of these political freedoms. Since the end of 2000, while democratisation has continued in much of the rest of the country, political controls have tightened in Papua. The history of the Suharto years as well as the experience of the past five years in Papua shows that tight political controls and repression are counterproductive. They tend to fuel Papuan nationalist sentiments and resentment against Indonesia.

The violent riot in Abepura (15-16 March) reflects something of the depth of feeling among Papuans, their desperation and the degree of alienation from Indonesia. There are also signs in the Abepura riots of a radicalisation of the independence struggle and the emergence of a younger generation of activists, who see that the strategies of both the Presidium and the Papuan supporters of Special Autonomy have failed. The attack on a Kostrad post in Arso district near the border with PNG, some 70 kms from Jayapura, on 10 April, which left two soldiers and two of the attackers dead as well as one soldier and a student wounded, is a further indication that tensions and the level of violence are rising. [47]

**Australia: Insouciance, ignorance and over confidence**

The 43 Papuans could not have arrived at a worse time for the Howard government. The government has invested considerable political capital and tax payer money into the relationship with Indonesia. The 2002 Bali bomb attack was a turning point in relations under President Megawati that enabled close cooperation in anti-terrorism and illegal migration. President Yudhoyono's election was especially welcome. The Australian government considered that Yudhoyono was someone with whom it could work. John Howard made a point of attending Yudhoyono's installation. The Australian government provided a $1 billion aid package after the tsunami devastated Aceh and North Sumatra. President Yudhoyono made a successful visit to Australia in 2005. In the face of much popular anti-Indonesian feeling surrounding the Schapelle Corby case, the government urged that Australians respect the Indonesian legal system.

During the row over the asylum seekers, John Howard has expressed his confidence in the strength of the relations: "Indonesia and Australia are close and we have a lot at stake in our common partnership in this part of the world. Australia has demonstrated that she is a true and good friend of Indonesia at a time of adversity and difficulty." [48] Howard's confidence in the relationship with Indonesia was also reflected in the optimism that the crisis would pass quickly: "…we will sail through fairly effectively and with relative speed, the current difficulty we have." [49]

Some of Howard's over- confidence is related to his emphasis of his personal relations with Yudhoyono. Downer also stresses his friendship with his Indonesian counterpart, Hassan Wirajuda. As Richard Woolcott has suggested, good personal rapport between leaders is not sufficient. A good relationship between leaders "...masks the sensitivities and ongoing policy differences that still exist below the surface. This relationship [with Indonesia] has always been fragile, and this is another manifestation of that fragility." [50] The good personal rapport Whitlam and Keating had with President Suharto were also not sufficient, but might have counted for more in Suharto's authoritarian government, with much decision making held in the President's hands. When Yudhoyono tested the personal relationship with Howard with his telephone call, the Prime Minister was not able to oblige.

The rosy picture the Howard government has presented of relations with Indonesia might be an accurate picture of its links with key members of cabinet. However, in a democratising Indonesia, power and influence in Jakarta has become quite diffused. Even before the current row, anti-Australian sentiment in the parliament, especially the foreign relations and defence committee, was strong. The visa decision has provided parliamentarians unsympathetic towards Australia with further ammunition to add to the deep-seated , Timor- related resentments. The Indonesian media

reflects a broader range of opinion. There have been quite a few opinion pieces critical of Indonesian policies in Papua and the knee jerk reaction to the asylum seekers, nevertheless there has been no shortage of articles and cartoons sharply critical of Australia.

For someone who chooses his words so carefully, John Howard's comments on the asylum seekers row have been revealing. The Prime Minister's, and presumably his advisors', ignorance of the Menzies government's foreign policy has been noted. There has also been a certain insouciance in the Prime Minister's comments about political conditions in Papua, as in the following exchange with Radio 3AW's Neil Mitchell:

> Mitchell: Is it fair to put people in jail for 15 years for flying the wrong flag?
>
> Prime Minister: No, if that has happened, I don't think that is fair, but there are a lot of things in a lot of countries around the world that aren't fair. [51]

The Howard government has underestimated the depth of Indonesia's problems in Papua, the depth of Papuan estrangement from Jakarta, and the depth of Indonesian sensitivities about Papua. It has wanted to prevent relations with Indonesia being held hostage by, in its eyes, a relatively minor issue, as had happened with East Timor and West New Guinea. It does not seem to have realised how restricted political freedom has become in Papua and, accordingly, did not appreciate the impact in Indonesia of the open displays of Papuan nationalism broadcast from Australia since January. The Papuan asylum seekers, their Morning Star flag and their Christianity have received extensive and, on the whole, sympathetic coverage in the Australian media. SBS television's evening news coverage of Good Friday featured the Papuan asylum seekers at prayer in a Melbourne church.

On 14 April, the Howard Government announced new arrangements for the processing of asylum seekers. It would seem that while the Howard government had been slow to recognise Indonesian sensitivities about Papua, Indonesia quickly focused on the Howard government's Achilles' heel: illegal migration. The new arrangements would mean that any future Papuan asylum seekers would be processed on Nauru, Manus or Christmas islands, whether they landed on the offshore islands already excised for migration purposes or on the mainland. One of the results of this re-arrangement would be to deprive Papuans of the opportunity to mobilise support for their independence struggle from Australian soil. If this was an attempt to assuage the Indonesian government, the initial response from Jakarta would not have given the Howard government much encouragement. Indeed, President Yudhoyono toughened his rhetoric against Australia. "Don't insult us, don't toy with us and don't deny us justice," was his message to Australia, as reported in his address to an audience of senior policy makers. [52]

Perhaps more importantly, the Howard government's new arrangements have created a much larger domestic Australian constituency interested in Papua by attracting the critics of the government's refugee and detention policies, including some of its own backbenchers. This human rights lobby is much larger and more influential than the decades-old, but very small, loose network of Australian supporters of Papuan independence. It might not be a good indicator of longer term public sentiment, but a privately commissioned "Newspoll", published by The Australian, indicated that 76.7% of those polled supported self-determination for the people of West Papua. [53]

**Towards Resolution?**

Australia is in an extraordinarily difficult position. It is the country among Indonesia's friends and neighbours with the greatest interest in Indonesia's resolution of the conflict in Papua. Yet it is in a

weak position to facilitate such a resolution. Indonesian responses to the visa decision reveal the deep suspicions about Australia's interests and intentions in Papua. These suspicions related directly to Indonesians' understandings of Australia's role and objectives in the international intervention in East Timor. Any overt Australian attempt to facilitate a resolution in the current fragile state of relations is likely to be deeply resented in Jakarta. However, the longer term consequences if Indonesia does not move towards resolution, reduce its dependency on force and thereby reduce the possibility of an outbreak of violence could be much worse than a strained relationship. Such an outbreak of violence, as feared by Juwono Sudarsono, could become an international issue and the focus of campaigns in Australia and elsewhere for international intervention.

The United States and Britain have substantial economic interests in Papua through the Freeport mine and British Petroleum's Tangguh LNG project. [54] Both the governments and the corporations involved have an interest in a political resolution. The Freeport mine has been embroiled in political, economic, human rights and environmental controversies, involving its symbiotic relationships with the Indonesian military and government as well as with the Papuan communities on whose land the mine operates and the Papuan elite. The conflicts surrounding Freeport have shaped the way the human rights and independence movements have developed in Papua. BP's strategies in community development, relations with the Indonesian military and government might be best summarised as: 'do not as Freeport has done'. Nevertheless, it has not been able to isolate itself from the political instability in Papua, nor from the dysfunctions in administration generated by Jakarta's policy of partition and the establishment of West Irian Jaya.

The killing of two American teachers and one Indonesian at Freeport in August 2002 together with the contested FBI and Indonesian investigations into the murders obstructed the resumption of US-Indonesia military to military relations for more than two years. The murders were one factor in stimulating Congressional interest in Papua. Department of State Authorization Act for 2006, passed by the House of Representatives in July 2005, was highly critical of Indonesian policy in Papua. Secretary Rice told the House International Relations Committee, on 16 February 2006, that while the US recognised Indonesian sovereignty, Papua was "...not off of our radar screen". [55]

Although Papua is a difficult issue in Indonesia's relations with the US and Britain, it does not excite Indonesian sensitivities in quite the same way it does with Australia. The importance for Indonesia of economic and military relations with the US and Britain open opportunities for these countries to encourage Indonesia to move towards resolution.

The influential Council on Foreign Relations has outlined a proposal for resolution of the conflict in Papua. Rather more optimistic than this paper, Blair King, the author of the Council's report, argues that there is a "window of opportunity" for a comprehensive solution, building on the Papuan support in the election of President Yudhoyono and the momentum of Helsinki agreement on Aceh. He urges that Papua not be ignored while the Aceh agreement is implemented. The Council recommends that the US and other friendly states, including Australia, support "...Indonesian conflict resolution efforts through quiet but firm diplomacy." The report's key recommendation to the Indonesian government was that it realise its public commitments to resolving the Papua conflict by engaging with the legitimate representatives of Papuan society in a wide ranging dialogue. King argues that Special Autonomy remains the "most comprehensive and appropriate overall framework" for resolution and recommends implementing it fully. [56]

Is it possible that Jakarta's Papua policy could change? It is unclear whether Special Autonomy retains sufficient credibility either in Jakarta or Papua to be the framework for resolution. Nevertheless, the Special Autonomy experience has important lessons for any resolution in Papua. It shows that Papuan participation is critical and that Papuan representation in the negotiations needs to be more broadly based than was the case with the Special Autonomy Law. Likewise, at the Jakarta

end, those organisations that undermined the implementation of Special Autonomy need to be brought into the negotiating process and be committed to a new resolution. It may be, as with the Helsinki agreement, that international mediation and monitoring is essential if implementation is to be effective. The agreement on Aceh might be a model of what is politically possible with Papua.

Does it require a tsunami-like change of mindset among Jakarta's policy makers and politicians or is there something in reports that the President might be open to Helsinki's Crisis Management Initiative playing a role in Papua? [57] How will President Yudhoyono respond to the proposal of Papua's first directly elected Governor for a dialogue on an autonomy arrangement similar to that in Aceh? [58] How these and similar questions are answered over the next couple of months will influence the way the Papuan crises evolve. There is a danger that the tensions in the relationship with Australia will deflect the Indonesian government's attention from addressing the core problem of how to reform its governance in Papua. More optimistically, there is the possibility that the violence in Papua, the asylum seekers and the tensions with Australia become a circuit breaker for policy makers in Jakarta and political leaders in Papua.

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## Endnotes

[1] In this paper 'Papua' refers to the Indonesian western half of the island of New Guinea. The Indonesian territory consists of two provinces, Papua and West Irian Jaya. The various and changing nomenclature for the territory reflect the conflict surrounding its status. Papuans prefer Papua or West Papua, while Indonesian governments have used West Irian and Irian Jaya.

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